

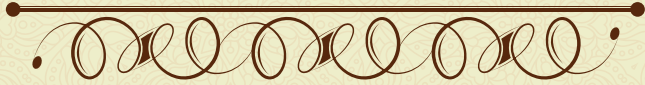
# IFAASD

## *Youth Festival*





## Youth Festival of North America (YFNA)



Dear Patrons,

The Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego is proud to present the Eighth Annual Youth Festival of North America (YFNA). The primary goal of this festival is to provide a prestigious platform for young artists across North America to showcase their talents in Indian classical arts. Beyond that, we aim to inspire other young individuals to develop a passion for these beautiful traditions whether through learning or performing. We hope that this festival will serve not only as a stage for artistic excellence but also as a meeting ground for young performers to connect, collaborate, and build a close-knit community of classical art enthusiasts. We believe that these connections will motivate and support young artists to pursue their art even as they transition to college and adult life. In addition, we aspire for the festival to spark a broader interest in Indian classical arts among youth of all backgrounds—both Indian and non-Indian alike.

This year's festival features the following:

- 25 young participants, between the ages 11 and 29 years, who were competitively selected will be performing vocal and instrumental music and Indian classical dance forms such as Bharathanatyam, Odissi, and Kathak.
- Fifty five students from San Diego will be participating in the instrumental and vocal concerts as well as in the Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and Kathak performances.

- The participants will showcase through their performances the bani (style) of their eminent gurus. The gurus include Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Rajarajeshwary Bhat and Kruthi Bhat, Aishwarya Vidhya Raghunath, Amrutha Venkatesh, Sandeep Narayan, Dr. CM Venkatachalam, HN Bhaskar, RK Shriramkumar, Chitravina Ravikiran, Lalgudi GJR Krishnan, Dr. R.S.Jayalakshmi, . Shankar Kandasamy and Radhamany Varadhachari, Dr. S. Divyasena, Indhumathi Gopalakrishnan, Shambhavi Dandekar, HK Venkatram, Charumathi Raghuraman, Dr. Thiruvarur Bhaktavatsalam, Arjun Ganesh, SV Ramani, Tiruvarur Vaidyanathan, Patri Satish Kumar, N. Guruprasad, Murali Krishna and T.H. Subashchandran.

- Featuring talented students of Dr. C.M. Venkatachalam, Revathi Subramanian, and Subbu Iyer, presenting vocal and instrumental renditions in the Indian classical tradition.

- A vibrant array of classical dance performances by students of renowned gurus:

Suman Nayak, Aler Krishnan, Neha Patel, Aarthi Narain, Aparna Kaushik, Meenu Srinivasan, Rohini Herur, Shibani Patnaik and Gargi Chattopadhyaya. These performances will span a variety of Indian classical dance forms, celebrating both tradition and innovation.

- A unique and thought-provoking thematic production featuring Priyadarsini Govind alongside a group of 11 talented dancers.

- A deeply devotional and artistically rich solo performance by Sathvikaa Shankar, exploring the divine experiences of Lord Skanda through the classical Margam format.

- A traditional Carnatic vocal concert by acclaimed artist G. Ravikiran, accompanied by Sruthi Sarathy on violin and Raamkumar Balamurthi on mridangam, bringing the festival to a majestic close.

- Honoring artistic excellence with special guests: Sangeetha Acharya T.S.R. Krishnan and Hon. Dr. Darshana Patel.

Through the Youth Festival, IFAASD proudly acknowledges the devotion, dedication, and discipline of students, parents, and teachers who continue to preserve and promote the rich tradition of Indian classical arts in North America. We are deeply appreciative of the enthusiasm and commitment of the young artists who are traveling from across the country to participate in this prestigious celebration of music and dance. Thank you for supporting these talented young performers and for championing the mission of the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego.

Together, let us celebrate and preserve the timeless beauty of Indian classical music and dance through the passion and dedication of the next generation.

### **Shekar Viswanathan**

For Indian Fine Arts academy of San Diego Trustees and Board



**Sangeeta Acharya**

*Thiruvaiyaru S.R. Krishnan*

**Chair of Festival**

Sangeeta Acharya Thiruvaiyaru S.R. Krishnan is a Vākgèyakāra, Védic scholar, poet, lyricist, composer, journalist, a story writer, and an operatic playwright. Krishnan was trained in Karṇāṭaka Sangîtam by his father Gāna-Bhûshaṇam Brahmasri Kumāramangalam Srinivāsa-Rāghavan (KSR or Rāgasri), and by many other legends of the 20th Century including Maharājapuram Viswanātha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer and G.N. Bala Subramanyam. Krishnan has been performing since 1955 in India, Far East Asia, Europe, Great Britain, and the United States, accompanied by well-known artists many of whom are leading names in the Indian Music world. Krishnan is also a celebrated exponent of “Dakshina-sampradaya-Sankeertanam, Abhang-Sankeertan & Hari-Kathā traditions”, performing these divine formats encompassing music from Hindusthāni and Karnataka-Sangeeta traditions of India. His Gurus for these ancient traditions include Brahmasri Rāgasri, Brahmasri Nāthamuni Nārāyaṇa-Iyengar, Abhang Sirónmañi Nārāyaṇa-Sāstri, and Swāmi Haridoss Giri (renowned as ‘Guruji’) with whom Krishnan had performed since 1959 through Guruji’s Jeevan-samadhi in 1990s. Krishnan’s earliest Opera based on three versions of “Rámāyaṇa”, titled Sitāyāscaritam-Mahat or Triveni-Ramayana” was staged first in 1965, in India. A thespian since youth, Krishnan had performed in the prestigious Kalidas Festivals in Ujjain to play leading roles in many of Kalidas’s famed works. He has hundreds of live recordings and compact discs; some of which are also available, on-line, and also on two YouTube channels (Rāgasri & GuruBhakti).

A disciple of His Holiness Jagadguru Kanchi Paramāchārya (68th Pontiff of the Adi Sankara Order), Krishnan continued training in the Vedas and scriptures in Sanskrit College, Madras under the direct auspices of Paramāchārya. His most recent book, ‘Periyavā Kālaḍiyilirundu’ detailing his personal interactions with on HH Paramāchārya, over a 10-year period, is well received.

Krishnan with his wife Radha and his daughters/disciples, Priya, Harini & Subha (aka ‘Krishnan-Sisters’ in the music world) are all involved in several philanthropic & charitable causes. Krishnan’s performances are mostly, if not all of them, fundraisers for Charities and Philanthropy and for temples; those live recordings supplement the Krishnans’ support to charities, Homes for the mentally and physically challenged and hospitals for the underprivileged.

A gold medalist in the 1960s from the University of Madras, India, Krishnan has been a Fellow of the Royal Chartered Institute of Bankers (London) and a Fellow of the Institute of Financial Accountants (London). Krishnan has held top executive positions with several International Banks, in Asia, Europe, Great Britain and the US, and has widely traveled the globe for more than 50 years. He is the founder CEO and Chairmen of several reputed US Fiduciary firms that served as Receivers, Trustees, Regulator, Monitor et al. at the nomination of US Federal and State Agencies, Regulators, Banks, and Foreign Governments. He has served as a United States Trustee and also as the Special Deputy Commissioner of California State for Financial Protection & Innovation.

# How Fine arts, especially, Music and Dance could become the remedy for the Youth, today, to channel their energies and intellect towards a civil and harmonious Society?

Greetings to the IFAA patrons and felicitations to the Young artists of the Festival.

Since 2008, I have had the privilege of contributing, more than two dozen articles to the Souvenirs of the IFAA (SD) on a variety of subjects/titles including on the current challenges and misnomers on appreciating 'Karnataka Sangeetam. This time, as was requested by the president of the Academy, my attempt will be to address the angst and sentiments of many millions of grandparents, parents, and their youngsters, of today, and search for a commonly acceptable solution to the fears and agitations of the youngsters, through Music and Dance.

Most of the readers may agree that not only the generation of immigrant Americans like me who have lived here (since the 1970s), but also most of the youngsters, born to immigrants and brought up in the US, are facing visible and inexplicable pressures due to the current political climate, which has significantly deteriorated in the last several months, due to intense polarization and unintended division.

Here are some of the pressures confronting young Americans of varied ethnic origins:

- **Mental and Emotional Well-being:** The political climate is linked to increased anxiety and stress among young people, who worry about the nation's future, education systems, careers and opportunities, economic stability, and also the climate change. A significant percentage of youth, report their serious concerns about the state of current US politics and the apparent wrong trajectories threatening to divide the American-fabric woven by love, empathy, and societal cohesiveness. Studies indicate that the current political environment can negatively impact

mental health, with young people who dissent or voice opinions on the current administration being more likely to report mental health issues, due to suppression of expressions and fear of retribution.

- **Political landscape and resulting disagreements,** amidst family members, have strained relationships with many young people, and many experience anxiety, discussing politics, even at home, of course more so in school or at work. Young people tend to internalize political conflicts through their close relationships, rather than primarily through open communications or social and common media, again for fear of retribution directly and/or through educational institutions which had hitherto been a global hallmark of the most admired US Freedom of Expression.

- **Disillusionment and Fatalism:** a perception of a dysfunctional government and a sense of a broken political system could lead young voters to feel fatalistic, with the American Dream appearing harder to achieve. Many young adults believe current political leaders have failed them and express low, faith in political institutions.

- **Concerns about Specific Issues:** Young people are particularly concerned about economic insecurity, including financial stability, housing costs, and income inequality. Climate change is another major concern, as is gun violence.

- **Impact on Civic Engagement:** Despite vocal and muted frustrations, young adults express their desire to strengthen democracy and are collectively participating in social, cultural, and political movements, indicating a serious motivation for changing the society towards greater tolerance, mutual respect, and empathy. While transformation

back into a healthy society is still possible, it appears – at least in the short term – difficult and hence tenuous!

How then could Fine arts, especially, Music and Dance become the remedy in this agitated era for youth to channel their energies and intellect towards creating, bolstering, and fostering a civil and harmonious Society as hoped and expressed above?

Music, and Dance are valuable outlets for all young people, particularly more for those feeling agitated or struggling with emotions, to channel their energies and intellect. These fine-art-forms offer several key benefits:

- **Emotional Expression and Regulation:** (1) **Safe outlet:** These fine art forms provide non-verbal and safe avenues for young people to express and process complex emotions, thoughts, and experiences that may be difficult to articulate verbally in direct interface. (2) **Release and Catharsis:** Engaging in serious learning and playing music, performing music and dance forms can all help release emotional tension and provide a sense of catharsis, easing feelings of stress, anxiety, or anger. Dedicated young musicians/dancers have the power to attract millions of fans through small and large groups of peoples brought under one roof, who assemble just for enjoying the performances in a unique ambience, helping them to relax and lose oneself and set aside the artificial barriers that otherwise seem to challenge and separate them. (3) **Emotional Regulation Skills:** By engaging in the creative process, youth can gain a better understanding of their emotions, learn healthy coping mechanisms, and develop strategies to manage stress and anxiety, improving their emotional regulation. (4) **Mindfulness and Focus:** Activities like dance or creative arts require focus and concentration, helping young people develop mindfulness, staying grounded and remain present, and reduce the intensity of emotional responses.

- **Cognitive Development and Intellectual Engagement:** (1) **Brain Stimulation:** Music and Dance

stimulate various cognitive functions, including memory, attention, modulation, and critical thinking. (2) **Creativity and Imagination:** Dance forms unleash in the youth their latent urge for creativity and imagination, exploring different ideas, concepts, and perspectives. (3) **Improved Focus and Memory:** Music is remarkably a positive addition gently pushing towards excellence; towards greater memory if the student is enthusiastic to create one's own original expression of Music – both with meaningful poetry towards vocal expression and stellar solfa expose resulting in soothing Instrumental music through a plethora of conventional and exotic instruments.

- **Self-Esteem and Confidence Building:** (1) **Sense of Accomplishment:** Learning, expression and performing skills are not only motivating but positively addictive, making the performer set higher goals to achieve and be recognized. These steps give the youth a sense of accomplishment and pride, boosting their self-esteem. (2) **Positive Self-Image:** Through engaging in artistic activities, young people can build confidence in their abilities and develop a positive self-image. (3) **Empowerment:** Discovering their unique voice and abilities through the art-forms can empower young people and augment and foster the confidence of self-worth.

- **Social Skills and Connection:** (1) **Communication:** Music and Dance forms offer alternative modes of expression when verbal communication becomes challenging, allowing youth to express themselves through artistic mediums and potentially enhancing communication skills in other areas of life. (2) **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Many art forms, such as music or dance, involve collaborative projects that promote teamwork, cooperation, and social interaction. (3) **Sense of Belonging:** Engaging and frequenting in group activities, getting affiliated with Dance and Music organizations help foster social connections and a sense of belonging, which is crucial for emotional well-being.

In summary, Music and Dance offer an integrated

approach to address the needs of agitated youth all over the world irrespective of individualized circumstances applicable to ethnicity, linguistic and cultural differences, traditional practices, and forms of expressions. In spite of phenomenal differences in approach, Music and Dance augment avenues for cognitive stimulation, social connections and interactions and self-discovery.

Let me zoom-in towards Indian Music and Dance forms from the universal context explained above. Since IFAA has focused on both systems of Indian Music and all Dance forms of India for about eighteen years, I will juxtapose my observations towards Indian American youth and how our Music and Dance can be -an undeniable healer, rejuvenator, and creative influence on our Youth, contextually.

Most of the Indian American youth are exposed to a lot of genres such as Pop, Rock and Hip-Hop/Rap and old classical, ethnic, and country music and most of such genres are popular amongst billions of peoples; in fact, over the decades, some of the top chart artists in many such genre are of Indian origin! Against that backdrop, Indian music has grown prominent, for over 75 years with exponential growth in universal appreciation. Indian music, especially in classical forms stands out due to its complex use of melodic modes or scales (ragas), lyrical content and compositions (songs) and scintillating rhythmic cycles (talas) emphasizing improvisation and emotional expressions (bhava). Indian music is culturally significant, playing a vital role in the ancient culture and often linked to spirituality and self-realization. Such a deep inseparable connection with cultural and philosophical ethos contributes to its enduring and eternal appeal.

Famous musicians such as Pandit Ravishankar, legendary sitar maestro (together with Alla Rakha and Zakir Hussain, famed percussionists) played the pioneering role in popularizing Indian classical music in the West, particularly through their collaborations with many other stalwarts such as Yehudi Menuhin and George Harrison, the lead guitarist of the

Beatles. Ravi Shankar's contemporaries such as Ali Akbar Khan (sarod maestro), Ustad Vilayat Khan and Nikhil Banerjee, other highly respected sitarists, followed suit and such collaborations with western musicians significantly increased the global awareness and appreciation of Indian classical music. Then followed a hundred other top notch Indian musicians from both Indian systems such as M S Subbulakshmi, L Shankar, Vikku Vinayaka Ram, L Subramaniam, Mandolin Srinivas, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Kishori Amonkar, Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan and great dancers such as Rukmini Devi Arundale, Balasaraswati, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Vijayantimala and Udhaya Shankar, Sitara Devi, Birju Maharaj, Chitresh Das, and the list is long and growing exponentially. While most of them are remembered only by names, hundreds of next generation artists continue to globe trot more frequently and expose the Indian culture, traditions and Music and Dance to wider universal appeal.

Indian Film Industry is acclaimed as the number one in the world, judged from the largest number of films produced in a year (more than 2,500 in 2024); it relies significantly on Film music and by a rough estimate releases about 12,000 songs a year in about 20+ Indian languages. This in fact has been the major factor in spreading the appreciation of Indian Music globally. More than 50% of the film songs that are churned out in a given year rely, even today, on melodic modes or scales (ragas). Indian Classical music, especially the south Indian music system known as Karnataka Sangeetam is acclaimed globally as the most complex system of music and hence the most attractive as well. By an unofficial count, this south Indian music system which relies significantly on lyrical-compositions is said to account for an approximate repository of 72,000 songs (in-print) in several languages gathered over a few centuries.

Indian dance forms are not necessarily the most popular globally, but they are now widely recognized and appreciated globally for their rich history, cultural significance, and diverse styles. Their popularity is due to several factors, including their ancient roots, expressive nature, and influence on

Indian Film Industry as a whole and on global events national and international, such as The Olympics.

Many Indian dance forms, particularly the six classical forms, have a strong spiritual and devotional aspects, resonating with audiences on a deeper level. The expressive nature of these dances allows for a powerful emotional connection between the performer and the viewer, transcending language barriers. This emotional and spiritual depth contributes to the enduring appeal of Indian dance forms. While other dance forms like ballet are also popular globally, Indian dance forms hold a unique position due to their historical depth, cultural richness, and ability to connect with audiences on multiple levels.

If we were to ignore, for a moment, the current concerns in the US, that is feared to impact the education systems and the renowned educational institutions, Indian American Youth have hitherto been focusing not only on their strong academic record/scores to compete for entry in to prestigious educational institutions, but also on demonstrating and proving their intellectual curiosity through interviews, essays, leadership and personality traits and interests through extracurricular activities most of which are aligned to their prowess in Music and Dance. Indian American parents are noteworthy for the right or wrong reasons to aspire for their children to get into the top 5 or 6 Ivy League schools with their acceptance rates hovering around 4% or even lower. Most of the high schoolers from this ethnic group are indeed smart and instead of rebelling, start learning music – vocal or instrumental and most of the young girls choose dance forms. The focus, of the ‘aspiring’ parents (and their children) and obliging teachers, seems to complete the students’ debut performances (in music and dance) well before the high school graduation so that the grand (often extravagant showcasing of) programs are well digitally documented and presented to the ivy league universities with the (admission) applications. If we were to take the above candid expression in intended good humor and become less reactive, there is also corresponding merit, arising out of such

programs and performances, influencing the children/youth for the rest of their lives – as mentioned in the preamble.

With a population of more than 5.4 million, Indian Americans make up approximately 1.6% of the U.S. population and are the largest group of South Asian Americans, the largest Asian-alone group, and the second-largest group of Asian Americans. About 7% of this population are under the age of 18, and 13% are 65 and older, according to Pew Research Center. Although there is no authentic statistics available, it is believed that about 10% of the Indian American population (ages 9 to 25) are serious learners of Indian music and dance forms either by design or by default. The regular audience for Indian performances of Music and Dance, is believed to be a healthy 30% of the overall ethnic group, or about 1.6 millions of Indian origin and curious and serious non-Indian audience growing exponentially over the last ten years augmenting serious viewership.

That is the group of Indian Americans we need to focus and make them bring in the rest of disinterested Indian American children in to the fold of Indian Music and Dance performances with a view to encouraging more and more youngsters to take advantage of the extraordinary benefit that would accrue to the youngsters to keep them positively engaged rather than bemoan disillusioned and depressed about the recent changes in the overall political climate.

Lastly, there are certain valuable lessons to be learned by the youth and their parents who are already into Music and Dance. All of the above benefits detailed above, arising out of strong involvement in Music and Dance can be achieved only if all of us are serious and sincere in promoting the youngsters and fostering their interests so that strong foundations are laid for healthy minds with excellent appreciation for fine art forms.

1) There may easily be a thousand music and dance organizations in the US, both independent and University-affiliated outfits, which periodically feature music concerts and dance programs, of the

organic youth and often feature overseas talent, to expose serious music and dance to learners in this country. This number assumption is very conservative (given the vast size of the US with fifty states) and do not include many smaller organizations formed and based on linguistic, and provincial identities from India. Even if the membership of many organizations such as IFAA ranges between 200 to 400 families, the non-members in the respective communities who are occasionally-visiting audience, include numerous families with their children learning music and/or dance. Based on such conservative assumptions, the Indian American population with aspiring children in their families, should attend all such performances or concerts by all youngsters as a matter of duty so as to inculcate discipline in the minds of their own wards. Regrettably, such a sizable audience is universally lacking, painfully pointing to selfishness and/or apathy.

2) Even members of such organizations who routinely pay membership subscriptions (maybe) out of peer pressure, often do not attend most of the performances, resulting in near-empty halls!

3) Most of the parents (who aspire to see their children become great performers) accompany their youngsters 'only' for their performances but disappear as soon as their children's time slot is over and do not stay back for other performances – by other youth - even of extraordinary talent. This kind of apathy is sad and once again points to selfishness.

4) By a casual estimate, there are about 5,000 teachers of Indian Music and Dance forms – within the US and many of them seem to engage in teaching, primarily for supplemental income, with most of such (many of them being Internet teachers) having 50-100 students on their rolls (since Zoom offers 'convenience' to teach groups of students, long distance) and most of the teachers do not seem to insist that their students should attend 'public' performances by their peers and visiting artists – as a matter of fundamental requirement 'to learn basic performing skills on stage'.

5) IFAA and similarly placed organizations spend incredible amounts of time, finance and other resources organizing youth festivals and other festivals featuring visiting overseas artists as well. Sadly, even the performing artists – local or visiting - (both musicians and dancers) do not stay back for performances of others in the very same festival. Such a gesture (of regular attendance) is minimum professional courtesy. This apparent selfish attitude should change; otherwise, while organizations such as IFAA may spend massive amounts of money bringing these young artists from around the country and other parts of the globe, a regularly declining audience (for most of the time) in the festival arena might accentuate the closures of such noble organizations who operate against odds and financial challenges.

To sum up, Indian Music and Dance and other fine art forms are undeniably excellent remedies for the troubled youth who face severe challenges with changes in attitudes around their landscape; but no amount of organizational resources can motivate more youngsters unless the sizes of the appreciating and applauding audiences expand significantly, demonstrating an overall sense of duty and angst from the parents, community members, the society and the artists, all around, and the YOUTH.

Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha

**Thiruvaiyaru S R Krishnan**



The image shows a promotional graphic for Archanas School of Dance. On the left, there is a logo featuring a stylized purple figure in a dance pose next to the text 'archana School of Dance'. Below the logo, the text reads 'Founder & Artistic Director Smt. Aarthi Narain'. There are three contact icons: a green WhatsApp icon with the number '+13238394017', a red and white Instagram icon with the handle 'archanaschoolofdance', and a blue and white website icon with the URL 'www.archanaschoolofdance.com'. On the right side of the graphic, there is a photograph of a person's hands in a traditional Indian dance mudra, with red and white patterns on the palms and fingers, wearing gold jewelry.

### **Stage Management / Decorations, Lighting**

Tadimeti Rao, Krishna Meduri, Seetha Janakiraman,  
Aler Krishnan, Neha Patel, Suman Nayak

### **Audio / Video Recording**

Subbu Iyer, Sai Shankar, Deepak Ramaswamy & Serge  
Swiderski of Perfect Video

### **Auditorium**

JCC staff and management

### **Stage Hands and Volunteers**

Tadimeti Rao, Pavan Battiprolu, Shashi Pottathil

### **Youth Volunteers**

IFAASD would like to thank all youth volunteers for their  
generous help in staging and managing this festival.

### **Web Design / Invites / Promotion**

Narayanan Gopala, Sai Narain, Pavan Bhattiprolu, & Shekar  
Viswanathan

### **Rehearsal Space Donation**

Abhinaya Arts Academy

### **Souvenir & Text Editing**

Usha Viswanathan & Shekar Viswanathan,  
Dr. C. M. Venkatachalam

### **Poster and Souvenir Design**

Gnanavel Rajendran

### **Institutional Sponsors**

Qualcomm

### **Festival Sponsors**

Seetha Janakiraman and Narayanan Gopala  
Revathi and Suresh Subramanian  
Usha and Shekar Viswanathan  
Neha and Hemanth Sampath  
Krishna Meduri and Tadimeti Rao

## **A special thanks**

to

**Sangita Acharya Sri. TSR Krishnan, and  
Dr. Darshana Patel**

for presiding over the festival,  
all of the sponsors,  
the IFAASD Board of Trustees  
and management committee,  
the patrons of the organization,  
visiting youths and artists  
and their families,  
and the rasikas  
for making this happen.

## **IFAASD extends heartfelt thanks**

to all the  
volunteers for their  
invaluable support.

We sincerely  
apologize  
if any names have  
been unintentionally  
omitted.